

## Housing Benefit

### General Information Bulletin

Department for Work and Pensions, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street,  
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<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

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**HB G4/2014**

**17 April 2014**

<b>Contact</b>	Queries about the <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>technical content of this bulletin</b>, contact details are given at the end of each article</li><li>• distribution of this bulletin, contact <a href="mailto:housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk">housing.correspondenceandpqs@dwp.gsi.gov.uk</a></li></ul>
<b>Who should read</b>	All Housing Benefit (HB) staff
<b>Action</b>	For information <b>Reminder – Discretionary Housing Payments monitoring returns deadline is 17 April</b>

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## Mail opening is modernised

1. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is modernising how it receives and processes post which has resulted in changes to office postal addresses. Details are provided to ensure that any correspondence is correctly addressed and avoids any unnecessary delays.
2. From August 2013, a single service, known as the Agility Platform, which is part of DWP's Infrastructure Modernisation Programme, has been providing the capacity to open, scan and index post on receipt. Processing staff are notified when a scanned image is available for action.
3. To deliver this service, post for most DWP offices is now managed within two new mail opening units (MOUs) in Kidderminster and Telford. In addition, the units are also providing a post opening and distribution service for other business areas, some of which will transfer to the scanning process.

## Correspondence addresses for offices using the new MOUs

4. Your assistance and care in selecting the correct address details will really help to avoid any unnecessary postal delays.
5. There is a new postal address list of offices using the new MOUs and these have a Wolverhampton postal address, so please address any post to the office's "New MOU Address" to avoid delays.
6. Follow this [address link](#) for details.

There is also a new address for the Independent Case Examiner:

PO Box 209  
Bootle  
L20 7WA

## Unaffected offices

7. There are a few offices that are unaffected by these changes. There will be no postal changes for offices that are **not** shown on the "New Postal Address List", so please continue to use their current address.

## Postal Diversions and Business Reply Envelopes

8. All external partners, including local authorities (LA), should now use "new" Business Reply Envelopes as it reduces the delivery time. These can be obtained via the business as usual route way.

For further information, please contact [DWP Infrastructure Modernisation Programme](#).

## **Service Level Agreement between DWP Pensions Operations and LAs**

9. The DWP recently sought approval of the LA Practitioners Operational Group (POG) members to extend the duration of the current Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the DWP Pensions Operations and LAs beyond the current expiry date of 31 March 2014.
10. POG members agreed to this course of action. Therefore the current version of the SLA will remain in force until superseded.
11. In the meantime liaison officers within DWP Pensions Operations will be contacting you about the End of Year Certificates in place for the current SLA.

## **Pension Credit Claims by telephone**

12. Following a successful test of Pension Credit telephone claims at Dundee and Motherwell Pension Centres, the DWP has taken the decision to implement this across the Pensions network.
13. Customers are being encouraged to make their claim to Pension Credit by telephone as the preferred channel for claiming. By doing so customers can expect to receive a decision on their claim more quickly than by submitting a paper based claim.
14. Customers or their representatives can establish their entitlement to Pension Credit by accessing the [Pension Credit Calculator](#) via the GOV.UK website. This will also advise them of what documentary evidence they will need to hand when making their claim
15. Customers wishing to claim Pension Credit should do so by calling the Pension Credit enquiry line on 0800 33 1234. Their entitlement will be established and they will be advised what evidence they require to hand before being passed to the appropriate Pension Centre where an advisor will take their claim.
16. Customers retain the right to make their claim on a paper based claim form but DWP are requesting the support of partner organisations by signposting customers to make their claim by telephone and to point out the benefits of doing so.
17. Any queries regarding this process should be referred to Dave Douglas (0121 781 3103) [dave.douglas@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dave.douglas@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)
18. Enquiries on Pension Credit should be made in using existing channels

## Universal Credit goes live in Shotton in Wales

19. From 7 April Shotton Jobcentre started to take claims for Universal Credit from new jobseekers, meeting our commitment to rollout Universal Credit in a carefully controlled way.
20. We have already demonstrated this with the successful launch of the Pathfinder in April and July last year and with the expansion of Universal Credit to Hammersmith in October and Rugby and Inverness in November 2013 and Rugby and Inverness in February 2014.
21. Take a look at the [press notice](#) for more information or [GOV.UK](#)
22. You may also like to look at a [new video](#) that explains Universal Credit to claimants.

## Amendment to the definition of service users in Housing Benefit Regulations

23. The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014 / 591) laid on 18 March 2014 and coming into force on 28 April 2014 amend the definition of service users in the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 / 213) and the Housing Benefit (persons who have attained the qualifying age for State Pension Credit) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 / 214). An amendment is also being made to the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) Regulations, Income Support Regulations and State Pension Credit Regulations.
24. The amendment is a clarification of the existing provisions, some of which are out of date, and is aimed at reducing confusion for claimants and staff alike. It aligns the definition in the Housing Benefit Regulations with the provisions in Universal Credit, Employment Support Allowance and the JSA 2013 provisions. The amendment now includes carers who are paid expenses etc. or any other sum because the person they care for participates as a service user, is covered by the provisions. This resolves a degree of confusion concerning this group of people.

## Direct Earnings Attachments – payments to LA bank accounts

25. Now that a number of LAs are using Direct Earnings Attachments (DEAs) some employers are paying the DEA into a DWP bank account rather than the account of the specified LA. At this stage we are collating data on the scale of this problem but staff are faced with having to do a number of refunds for payments that should not have been sent to us.
26. In order to minimise this problem we have taken a number of initial steps. One is to make it even clearer in our [Employer Guides](#) published on GOV.UK who

payments should be made to depending on who has initiated the DEA and that they must refer to the letter from the LA to make a payment to the correct account. Secondly, I would like to ask that you do all you can within your own letters to make it clear who payments should be made to and to emphasise the difference in payment requirements between an LA DEA and a DWP DEA.

27. DWP are also sending a further communication for employers following full implementation of the DEA process and this shall also make reference to ensuring they pay the correct authority.

## Queries

28. If you need any help with legislation/policy queries regarding DEAs or any other Housing Benefit (HB) recovery issues please email [hbandctb.overpayments@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hbandctb.overpayments@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Grant certification

29. Because of the abolition of the Audit Commission from April 2015 the Department for Communities and Local Government considered bids for a transitional body to take responsibility for the Commission's audit contract (which includes grant certification). The bid by the Local Government Association was successful and they have been appointed to create a new independent company to act as a transitional body when the Audit Commission closes.
30. As far as grant certification is concerned, there is no change to the current arrangements for LAs. Please continue to adhere to DWP's deadlines for the submission of your subsidy claim forms.

## Queries

31. Any queries related to this item should be sent to [hbctb.subsidyqueries@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hbctb.subsidyqueries@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Discretionary Housing Payment monitoring returns

32. Further to circular [HB A7/2014](#) this is a reminder to all LAs that the deadline date for returns to be sent back to DWP is 17 April 2014.
33. All returns should be sent to the following address: [dhp.monitoringinbox@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dhp.monitoringinbox@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Benefit cap uprating

34. Some LAs have been contacting the Belfast Cap Calculation Team (BCCT) about the uprating of individual benefit cap cases. The BCCT are not able to respond to these requests as the uprating process for all benefit cap cases is currently underway and, due to the volume of cases to be reviewed, the exercise is not due to be completed before the end of May 2014.
35. If these cases have still not been reviewed by the end of the uprating exercise, please contact the BCCT again and they would be happy to investigate.

## Secondment opportunity: DWP Housing Policy Division

36. An opportunity has arisen for an LA employee to join us on secondment.
37. There is a huge programme of welfare reform already underway and ensuring this is delivered on time presents a big challenge to the department. Working with LAs, who are one of our major stakeholders, features heavily within this. The value you can bring to the team will be in your understanding of how LAs are organised and being able to provide an LA perspective. This will also provide you with an opportunity to gain experience of the role of central government.
38. The successful candidate can expect to learn a great deal about how Ministers and officials develop policy options, consult and reach agreement on them across government, with the sector and with LAs, and will be expected to use and develop a wide range of skills to analyse, develop, compare explain and defend policy options.
39. The successful candidate will be the liaison in Housing Policy on housing-related data sharing projects and queries. They will also advise on complex queries regarding the meaning and scope of the HB regulations, including links to legacy benefits, as well as developing communications on particular issues for LAs. In addition, they may also be expected to take up other housing policy related work, such as on uprating of HB.

## Person requirements

- good understanding of HB and other income-related benefits
  - good drafting and communication skills
  - ability to build and maintain effective working relationships with LAs and other stakeholders
  - ability to work with people at different levels in the organisation and to work as part of a team to achieve results
40. The post is being offered for six months initially but this will be reviewed at the end of the period and could be extended for up to a maximum of two years. The post is full-time and based in Caxton House, Westminster. We do not want to deter candidates from outside of London applying, and therefore will

consider some remote working where this fits in with the business need. In addition we may be able to offer some help with travel expenses if additional costs are incurred.

41. We would like the successful candidate to be able to start in June 2014. If you are interested in applying, and are at S01/S02/PO1/PO2 level or equivalent (roughly equates to civil service HEO grade) or can demonstrate that you have the necessary skills, please send your CV with a covering letter by email to me by **Friday 2 May**. Interviews are expected to be held during week commencing 12 May.

[anna.bartlett1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:anna.bartlett1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

42. If you would like to have a chat about this opportunity please call me on 0207 449 5533.

## Statutory Instruments

43. The following Statutory Instruments (SIs) have been laid:

- 2014 No.516, The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 2014, coming into force from 1 April 2014
- 2014 No.591, The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014, coming into force 28 April 2014
- 2014 No.597, The Universal Credit and Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 2014, coming into force 28 April 2014
- 2014 No.606, The Social Security (Maternity Allowance) (Participating Wife or Civil Partner of Self-employed Earner) Regulations 2014, coming into force from 1 April 2014
- 2014 No.612, The Child Support Fees Regulations 2014, regulations made 12 March 2014
- 2014 No.614, The Child Support (Ending Liability in Existing Cases and Transition to New Calculation Rules) Regulations 2014, regulations made 12 March 2014
- 2014 No.618, The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Regulations 2014, coming into force 7 April 2014
- 2014 No.623, The Automatic Enrolment (Earnings Trigger and Qualifying Earnings Band) Order 2014 coming into force 6 April 2014
- 2014 No.715, The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, coming into force 1 April 2014

- 2014 No.771, The Housing Benefit and Universal Credit (Supported Accommodation) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, coming into force from 10 April 2014
- 2014 No.837, The Financial Assistance Scheme (Qualifying Pension Scheme Amendments) Regulations 2014, coming into force from 28 March 2014
- 2014 No.868, The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, coming into force 1 April 2014
- 2014 No.869, The Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, coming into force 1 April 2014
- 2014 No.884, The Social Security (Maternity Allowance) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014, coming into force 18 May 2014
- 2014 No.897, The Statutory Sick Pay Percentage Threshold (Revocations, Transitional and Saving Provisions) (Great Britain and Northern Ireland) Order 2014, coming into force 6 April 2014
- 2014 No.902, The Social Security (Habitual Residence) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, coming into force 31 May 2014
- 2014 No.904, The Social Security (Invalid Care Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, coming into force 20 May 2014
- 2014 No.916, The Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme Regulations 2014, coming into force 6 April 2014
- 2014 No.917, The Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2014, coming into force 1 July 2014

44. Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from DWP's own website <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/law-volumes/the-law-relating-to-social-security/> and the website of the Office of Publication Sector Information <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>



## What's new on the web

45. The following items can be found on the website link shown

Document Type	Subject	Link
<b>HB A6/2014</b>	The Housing Benefit (Habitual Residence) Amendment Regulations 2014	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a62014-the-housing-benefit-habitual-residence-amendment-regulations-2014">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a62014-the-housing-benefit-habitual-residence-amendment-regulations-2014</a>
<b>HB A7/2014</b>	Discretionary Housing Payment monitoring	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a72014-discretionary-housing-payments-reporting-measures">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a72014-discretionary-housing-payments-reporting-measures</a>
<b>HB A8/2014</b>	The Housing Benefit and universal Credit (Supported Accommodation) (Amendment) Regulation 2014	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a82014-the-housing-benefit-and-universal-credit-supported-accommodation-amendment-regulations-2014">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a82014-the-housing-benefit-and-universal-credit-supported-accommodation-amendment-regulations-2014</a>
<b>HB A9/2014</b>	Temporary Accommodation in Housing Benefit and Universal Credit	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a92014-temporary-accommodation-in-housing-benefit-and-universal-credit">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a92014-temporary-accommodation-in-housing-benefit-and-universal-credit</a>
<b>HB A10/2014</b>	Discretionary Housing Payment Guidance 2014	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a102014-discretionary-housing-payment-guidance-2014">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-a102014-discretionary-housing-payment-guidance-2014</a>
<b>HB S2/2014</b>	Additional funding to meet the costs of implementing welfare reforms changes in 2014/15	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-subsidy-circular-s22014-additional-funding-to-meet-the-costs-of-implementing-welfare-reform-changes-in-apr-2014-to-mar-2015">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-subsidy-circular-s22014-additional-funding-to-meet-the-costs-of-implementing-welfare-reform-changes-in-apr-2014-to-mar-2015</a>
<b>HB S3/2014</b>	Confirmation of the government funding, and overall expenditure limits to local authorities for DHPs in 2013/14	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-s32014-confirmation-of-funding-and-overall-expenditure-limits-for-">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-circular-s32014-confirmation-of-funding-and-overall-expenditure-limits-for-</a>

		<a href="#"><u>discretionary-housing-payments-in-apr-2013-to-mar-2014</u></a>
<b>HB &amp; CTB Guidance Manual 2014</b>	Updated guidance manual	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-and-ctb-subsidy-guidance-manual-2013-to-2014"><u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-and-ctb-subsidy-guidance-manual-2013-to-2014</u></a>
<b>DHP Guidance Manual 2014</b>	Updated guidance manual	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discretionary-housing-payments-guidance-manual"><u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discretionary-housing-payments-guidance-manual</u></a>
<b>HB Direct issue 147 April 2014</b>	Newsletter	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-direct-april-2014-issue-147"><u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-direct-april-2014-issue-147</u></a>
<b>HB G3/2014</b>	Benefit Cap end of project  Benefit Cap uprating  Memorandum of Understanding between DWP and LAs  Personal Independence Payment: learning lessons  Statutory Instruments  HB/CTB decisions by the Upper Tribunal  What's new on the web	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-bulletin-g32014"><u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-bulletin-g32014</u></a>
<b>HB U3/2014</b>	New Migrant Access to Benefit measures – First tier  Tribunal decisions	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-bulletin-u32014-new-migrant-access-to-benefit-measures-first-tier-tribunal-decisions"><u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hb-bulletin-u32014-new-migrant-access-to-benefit-measures-first-tier-tribunal-decisions</u></a>

## HB circulars recently issued

HB A6/2014  
HB A7/2014  
HB A8/2014  
HB A9/2014  
HB A10/2014  
HB S2/2014  
HB S3/2014